



**GSA COUNCIL**  
 Notice of Meeting  
 Wednesday, December 4, 2019  
 4:00PM – 6:00PM  
 NH 3318

**AGENDA**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
4:00PM	<b>1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks</b>	-
4:02PM	<b>2. Adoption of the Agenda</b>	For Approval
4:05PM	<b>3. Attendance</b>	For Information
4:10PM	<b>4. Approval of Minutes</b> a. November 6, 2019	For Approval
4:15PM	<b>5. Guest Presentations</b> a. Committee on Student Mental Health – Bill Chesney and Chris Read (15 mins) b. Graduate Supervision Task force – Laura McCrackin (15 mins) c. Fossil Free UW – Yonatan Strauch (15 mins)	For Information
5:00PM	<b>6. Reports</b> a. JRPC Update – Reid (5 mins) b. Update from the Board – Stirling (5 mins) c. Advising the President – Samuel (5 mins)	For Information
5:15PM	<b>7. Discussion</b> a. SCI and Communications (10 mins) – Sargent, Wass	For Discussion
5:25PM	<b>8. Commissioner Presentations</b> a. Aswin Annamalai (5 mins) b. Matthew Robbins (5 mins) c. Q&A / Discussion (5 mins)	For Information
5:40PM	<b>9. Council Structure</b> a. Short term research contracts vs Commissioner positions – Billedeau (5 mins)	For Approval
5:45PM	<b>10. Forward Planning</b> a. Political Positions – Robbins, van Wyk, Grimmer (15 mins) b. Winter 2020 Agenda – Billedeau (5 mins)	For Discussion
6:05PM	<b>11. Adjournment</b>	-
<b>Included in distribution:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EL-9 and GP-2 Changes</li> <li>- President's Report</li> <li>- GSA Work Plan</li> <li>- ESAC Report</li> <li>- Fossil Free UW Slides</li> </ul>		

## MINUTES

### 1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks 4:02

*Billedeau takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 4:02.*

### 2. Adoption of the Agenda 4:03

**Motion to approve the agenda (Billedeau/Robbins). Approved unanimously.**

### 3. Attendance 4:03

*Billedeau and Little take the attendance*

### 4. Approval of Minutes 4:03

The November 6, 2019 minutes were approved.

### 5. Guest Presentations 4:07

#### a. *Committee on Student Mental Health*

*Overview of progress made on recommendations for student mental health since the committee's inception in 2018. Some highlights include establishment of a mental health literacy training steering committee, academic recommendations working group, and participation in the Canadian Standards Association & Mental Health Commission of Canada creation of a Psychological Health and Safety Standard for Post-Secondary Students. Practices targeted at helping faculty and staff improve student mental health include training and academic initiatives. Training is part of the onboarding process for new faculty and is included as an incentive for the service component for annual reviews. Management are encouraged to enable their staff members to partake in training. The GSPA is considering mandatory training for TAs.*

#### b. *Graduate Student Supervision Task Force*

*The membership, purpose and methodology of the task force was described. Regarding grad student consultations, three approaches have been proposed: survey sent to grad students (completed), focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. If anyone from the GSA is interested in participating or has feedback on the six potential focus group questions, they are invited to reach out to the grad student representatives through email. Systemic weaknesses in supervision identified by councilors include power imbalance with supervisors, potential effects of minority and first-generation status of students, financial assistance, support for incoming grad students, lack of communication surrounding*

sabbaticals, and the course auditing process. The GSA should play a role in facilitating positive student-supervisor relationships, particularly in a high-level advisory and support capacity. The staff members and organizations that students can seek assistance from, as well as the processes involved, are not clearly visible to all students. The GSA can assist students in navigating the services available to them.

c. *Fossil Free UW*

The reasons for promoting Fossil Free initiatives, barriers towards implementing them, and the consequences of continued investment in oil and coal were presented. UWaterloo's investments and their impact on climate change initiatives were outlined, as well as successes so far and next steps. Fiduciary duties towards fossil fuel divestment were discussed; UWaterloo's pension plans currently rely on such investments, which makes it difficult to divest completely. A 2017 report outlines the percentage of stocks that include fossil fuels.

**6. Reports**

**5:13**

a. *JRPC Report*

The purpose of the JRPC was described. Robbins is the new councilor representative on the committee. Current activity is focused on reviewing the manual.

b. *Updates from the Board*

Council feedback is always welcome. First and second readings of policy manual approved; available on GSA website. Continuing to approve terms of reference for standing committees. Preparing for annual general meeting in April, new strategic planning cycle, and presidential successor. A call for a councilor to join the Presidential Nomination Committee was put forward; duties include reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates. Lamorea put her name forward as a representative from council. New board membership positions are available.

c. *Advising the President*

Updates on the Student Choice Initiative were delivered, i.e. funding opt-out rates for Fall term and court ruling against it. Opt-outs will not be reversed for Fall and Winter terms due to legal and logistical implications. A consideration process for the Spring 2020 term was outlined. Organizational progress on workplan, social

*media engagement, and GSPA-GSA cultural event in Winter 2020. Services and special projects include updates to health plan, grad house improvements, GSA survey, and SLC-PAC expansion. Policy 30 will be sent out to councilors next week, as well as minimal funding level increase.*

## **7. Discussion**

**5:30**

*Communication strategies surrounding GSA decisions and ongoing SCI changes for the Winter term were discussed. The President asked for feedback from councilors regarding their preferred frequency and mode of communication, aside from monthly meetings. The President clarified that UW administration did not influence SCI Winter fee opt-outs; they deferred to the two student government groups (WUSA & GSA). GSA's process and policies/bylaws were the deciding factors that determined the fee collection process for Winter; other universities may have unique and different structures that allowed them to make changes. Any further questions or comments regarding either of the points raised can be emailed to the President.*

## **8. Commissioner Presentations**

*Deferred to January meeting.*

## **9. Council Structure**

*Deferred to January meeting.*

## **10. Forward Planning**

**5:47**

### *a. Political Positions*

*More volunteers to work on this project are needed. There are currently 16 political positions; reducing down to 8 was suggested as a possible goal. Proposal on combining certain political positions was put forward. Appropriateness of Sustainability and Fossil Fuel Divestment positions was questioned; how relevant are they to graduate students? The impact of all political positions on grad students can be explicitly written into the description for clarity. The importance of consulting students on their opinions was acknowledged. Draft of the proposed mandate for political position overhaul was requested for the January 2020 meeting.*

### *b. Winter 2020 Agenda*

*Tentative agenda was displayed. Biggest change to meetings going forward is the incorporation of small group discussions, as well as 20-30 minutes at the beginning of meetings for free discussion period. If it is approved in the January meeting, the union voting process for council and board was explained, as well as timelines.*

## **11. Adjournment**

**6:08**

*The meeting was adjourned at 6:08.*